

WashingtonLearns

EARLY LEARNING • K-12 EDUCATION • HIGHER EDUCATION

August 2005

STEERING COMMITTEE LAUNCHES EDUCATION REFORM EFFORT

Gov. Christine Gregoire chaired the first steering committee meeting on July 25 for Washington Learns.

Advisory committee appointments were announced for [early learning](#), [K-12](#) and [higher education](#). The members of the advisory committees represent wide interests, including those of business, government, philanthropy, the education community, the legislature and the public.

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“I’m excited to see that our advisory committees are in place,” said Gov. Gregoire, calling the newly appointed members “the critical link for the steering committee” and commending them for their commitment to the effort. The three advisory committees will analyze priority issues throughout the education system and recommend options for the Washington Learns Steering Committee to consider.

The steering committee spent the morning adopting organizational procedures and hearing briefing presentations on early learning, K-12 and higher education that described the current system, students and funding.

The afternoon included a presentation by Dr. Tim Waters, the president and CEO of [Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning](#), that focused on economic, social and other trends influencing the future of education.

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FIND MORE INFO AT THE WASHINGTON LEARNS WEBSITE: www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov

In addition to kicking off the first Washington Learns Steering Committee meeting in July, the effort launched a website to help folks keep track of what’s happening.

Find meeting schedules, past meeting materials, a feedback form and more at www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov.

The website will be frequently updated with the newest information, including future meeting schedules for the steering committee and the three advisory committees. Check it out!



STEERING COMMITTEE LAUNCHES EDUCATION REFORM EFFORT *(continued)*

“To create a better education system, we must understand the many factors that will shape the future,” said Gregoire, “and we must be aware of past efforts to reform education.”

The steering committee will begin its work by reviewing earlier efforts and studies that sought to understand the issues facing education in Washington.


Washington Learns will answer three questions:

- Is Washington using its existing education resources efficiently?
- What defines the quality citizens want in early learning, K-12 schools and higher education?
- What needs to change to achieve the quality we all want?

“This comprehensive review of our education system will show us what is working well and what is not,” said Ann Daley, executive director of Washington Learns.

Governor Gregoire said Washington Learns “will not be just another study.”

“It will be an unblinking and thorough look at the state of our education system, and it will be followed by an action plan to strengthen our education system, including legislative proposals I will pursue aggressively.”

The governor noted that citizens who want to follow the progress and findings of Washington Learns will be able to do so through a special website, www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov. 

KEY FACTS FROM THE JULY 25 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Below are a few key facts about education in Washington taken from the July 25 steering committee meeting presentations, available at www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov


Early Learning

- Parents are their children’s first and most important teachers, caregivers and decision makers.
- There is a clear and compelling connection between the quality of children's early learning experiences and later success in school and life.
- Many parents are employed or in school and must seek help with the care and education of their young children.
- While substantial public and private resources are invested in early learning, no coherent system or standards exist to ensure consistent quality across programs.

K-12 Education

- There are more than one million students in Washington's 296 school districts.
- Washington school districts employ 100,000 staff. More than 60 percent of teachers hold a Master's degree or higher.
- Washington is implementing a standards-based system. Student achievement is improving at all levels.

Higher Education

- There are about 288,000 students in public higher education in Washington.
- All of the state’s public institutions are “overenrolled” except one.
- Washington ranks 49th in baccalaureate participation rate, but Washington is above the national average in the percentage of its citizens who have earned a Bachelor's degree. 

WASHINGTON LEARNS ORGANIZATION

The 2005 Legislature passed SB 5441, creating “a comprehensive education study steering committee.” Out of this legislation, the Washington Learns Steering Committee was born. The legislation also directed the steering committee to appoint advisory committees in early learning, K-12 and higher education. With the help of these advisory committees, the steering committee must now develop recommendations about how the state can improve Washington’s education system.

Washington Learns Steering Committee

Created by SB 5441, Washington Learns will examine the state’s education system—from early learning to K-12 to higher education—and find ways to improve it now and in the future.

Chair: Governor Christine Gregoire

Executive Director: Ann Daley

Early Learning Advisory Committee (Washington Early Learning Council)

The Early Learning Council was created by HB 1152. The Council will also serve as the Early Learning Advisory Committee for Washington Learns.

Co-chair: Bob Watt
Co-Chair: Regina Jones

Executive Director:
Karen Tvedt

K-12 Advisory Committee

As outlined in SB 5441, the K-12 Advisory Committee will provide recommendations for the steering committee to consider.

Chair: Superintendent
Terry Bergeson

Staff: Judy Hartmann

Higher Education Advisory Committee

As outlined in SB 5441, the K-12 Advisory Committee will provide recommendations for the steering committee to consider.

Chair: Roberta Greene

Staff: Debora Merle

Interim Report Dates:

Nov 15, 2005

June 16, 2006

Final Report Date:

Nov 15, 2006

WHAT WILL WASHINGTON LEARNS DO?

See the big picture.

- ✓ The steering committee and advisory committees will be looking at the whole education system—from early learning through K-12 and higher education.
- ✓ By taking a system-wide view of efficiency, quality and funding issues, Washington Learns will identify gaps in the current system—where we are failing our students—and recommend ways to make the system better.
- ✓ Part of the study will be about making sure the right resources are in place to help learners at each step of their education meet our high standards and expectations.

Build on past efforts.

- ✓ Numerous groups have looked at these issues and have created a significant knowledge base upon which we can build. Washington Learns will take that work to the next level and develop concrete policy recommendations.

Bring together the right people at the right time.

- ✓ Steering committee and advisory committee members are diverse and represent wide interests, including those of business, government, the education community, philanthropy, the legislature and the public.
- ✓ As the steering committee chair, the governor is personally involved in both the process and the decision-making.
- ✓ The steering committee intends to listen and reach out to the public throughout the process.
- ✓ The study will draw on the expertise and experience of some of our best and most creative thinkers.
- ✓ At the first meeting, steering committee members and meeting attendees were engaged and ready to address the issues.

Address critical issues.

- ✓ Demand for access to quality education at all levels is increasing faster than our current education system can respond. This work is critical to the future of our state.
- ✓ Our future depends on being able to educate Washington's one million-and-growing population of school children. Every day, 220 babies are born in our state. Today, only 145 are expected to graduate from high school and only 87 will enroll in a two- or four-year college. That's not good enough.
- ✓ Children in every community must have access to the learning opportunities and quality instruction they deserve.

Lead to action.

- ✓ This study will not end up “sitting on a shelf.” The governor is committed to addressing the final steering committee recommendations in her 2007-09 legislative package and budget proposal.

Help define education in our state.

- ✓ Washington needs an education system where students enter kindergarten ready to learn, and leave high schools with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college and the workplace.



Have feedback? Email it to steeringcommittee@washingtonlearns.wa.gov

Find ongoing updates on the progress Washington Learns is making at www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov

Use the online [feedback form](#) to comment on any aspect of the reform effort.